

WHAT NEXT???

This past week has been a time of contradictions. It was reported Indian males in Robeson County schools are four times more likely to drop out of school than white male students. Additionally, Indian females are five times more likely to drop out of school than white female students.

But what would one expect in Robeson County. This comes as no shock. It has been widely known that minority students, Indian and Black, have had difficulty remaining in school in Robeson County. While William Johnson, superintendent of Robeson County schools, does not seem to have a clue as to why this happens, we suggest one merely has to look back and examine the attitudes and political maneuvering of conservative whites over the years.

When the political power of the white establishment was at an all time high, Robeson County maintained five separate and unequal school systems. The whites insured their system was well funded and maintained but they also conspired to insure other systems would be inferior by the use of double voting. This, in our view, was a determined effort by white conservatives to keep minorities in their place. If minorities were denied an adequate education, then white supremacy would be safe.

However, many underestimated the will of the people. Many failed to realize that with education comes responsibility and even insight. And even the children of white conservatives, who intuitively knew something was wrong, began looking around and asking why. The result was change, thanks mainly to the leadership of concerned Indians. Both Indian and Black leaders fought double voting and later rallied some whites to eliminate the system which perpetuated five separate and unequal school systems. But only the system was destroyed; attitudes and prejudices remain. The old guard still remains and so do the myths.

Our current problem, in terms of drop outs, also can be traced to the employment practices in this county. Qualified Indians and Blacks are often overlooked when jobs are available in the county. Those in position to make decisions often will even go in search of white outsiders who are brought in to save us from ourselves. Qualifications apparently mean very little in Robeson County. It is widely recognized that it is more who you know than what you know or can do. Daily, jobs are awarded to individuals who are not deserving. Their virtue is that they are white and well-connected to the political, social, and economic power base in the county. This is gradually being turned around, but it's an

extremely slow process. Meanwhile, young people witness this. They become cynical about the whole process. They are not easily fooled because daily they witness the contradictions in our society. Daily they are reminded that hard work and good grades are often ignored if your skin is not white.

We must also remember that children in classrooms across our county are labeled on a daily basis by uncaring individuals who have merely fallen into the system to guarantee their own personal financial security. While Robeson County does have many good teachers and administrators, those unfit to teach and lead exist too and little is done to rid the county of such individuals. And when some of our children come up against such individuals, it becomes far easier to drop out than face the abuse, neglect, and disdain of such a civil war mentality. We believe any teacher or administrator who calls a child "dumb" should be fired immediately. Such verbal assaults, by supposedly "professionals," should not go unpunished!

And though politics, employment practices, job discrimination, lack of employment opportunities, and the educational process interact to reinforce the mistaken idea that education is not important, parents are also a large part of the problem. Not only in failing to properly raise, nourish, and motivate their children, some have chosen to abandon values. Consequently a child often grows up without knowing right from wrong. Some parents have turned their backs on the system, often refusing to participate in the "democratic process" by making the excuse that "it won't matter anyway." And from their experience in Robeson County, this is a very understandable attitude, but the children suffer as a result. Yes, the drop out rate is serious in Robeson County. It continues to grow. It's a complex result of many interwoven factors. But, without the care and concern of parents, the system continues to drag along, ignoring those who do not fit the expected pattern or mold and condemning those who have problems to the outer fringes of society. But, in our view, without concerned parents, the educational, social, political, and economic systems in Robeson County can only get worse and continue down the same old path. Change only comes through commitment. Change only comes from those willing to stand up and speak out. Change only comes when we care and become an integral part of the process, determined to seek a better tomorrow, if not for

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Along The Robeson Trail

By Dr. Stan Knisk, Director PSU Native American Resource Center

In the last segment, we saw the importance of the huge Monks Mounds at the Cahokia site in Illinois. And we saw how it fits into the larger picture of other flat-topped Mississippian period mounds, along with the one at Town Creek, North Carolina. But what about mounds closer to home, here along the Robeson Trail?

So far, there are no known examples of flat-topped Mississippian mounds east of Town Creek, even though there is evidence that Mississippian cultural influence did extend to Robeson County. But we do know of the presence of Woodland period mounds in the Lumbee River drainage.

The most readily apparent difference between Woodland mounds and Mississippian mounds is their shape: Woodland mounds are round-topped instead of flat-topped. The written record of Woodland mounds in Robeson County goes back to the time of Hamilton McMillan, one of the persons instrumental in the establishment of the Indian Normal School which became Pembroke State University.

McMillan recorded in 1882 that he had examined five mounds in Robeson County. His report describes them as notably similar to each other, in that they were all about 60 feet in circumference, and only about 2 feet higher than the surrounding soil surface. He also relates that all five mounds contained human skeletons, one with as many as fifty individuals (clearly indicating that he, or someone there at the same time, partially or entirely excavated these mounds).

J.A. Holmes, who was a geologist working for the

Bureau of Mines on a geological survey of eastern North Carolina, also recorded in 1916 the presence of presumably Woodland mounds in Robeson County. He stated that he was told by a Mr. D. Sinclair, of Plain View, that there were four mounds in the southern section of Robeson. Since Hamilton McMillan was from Red Springs, in the northern section, it might be safe to assume that the five mounds he recorded are different from the four reported by Sinclair.

There are also a few later references to Woodland mounds in Robeson County, including the work of David McLean of St. Andrews, and Ruth Wetmore (then affiliated with the Indian Museum of the Carolinas in Laurinburg). But since the late 1970's, the mounds of this area have finally been left alone, at least by archaeologists anyway. Mounds and other archaeological sites continue to be impacted by agriculture and, potentially, by development.

More than all other archaeological sites, mounds need to be preserved. They are the final resting places for many Native Americans of the past, and as such they deserve to be left alone, even by farmers.

Anyone with definite information about the location of mounds in this area should notify the Native American Resource Center, so that appropriate steps can be taken to avoid any further destruction of these ancient sacred sites.

For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in Old Main Building, on the campus of Pembroke State University.

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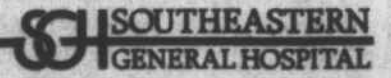


Sometimes knowing where to turn with a medical concern can be quite a dilemma. Perhaps you're new to the area and want to find a family physician...or you have a health problem that requires a specialist, but you don't know of one...it could be that you need information on substance abuse treatment...or Alzheimer's...or prenatal care.

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Notice Of Public Hearing

Notice is hereby given that the Robeson County Board of Commissioners shall hold a public hearing on September 16, 1991 at 6:00 p.m., at 701 North Elm Street, Lumberton, North Carolina. The purpose of this public hearing is to consider adoption of an ordinance to regulate the following:

**AUTOMOBILE GRAVEYARDS;
JUNKYARDS; AND REPAIR SHOPS.**

A copy of the proposed ordinance is on file with the Clerk of the Robeson County Board of Commissioners for review by interested parties.

All interested parties are invited to appear and make known their opinion on this matter.

LINDA A. HEDGPETH, CLERK
ROBESON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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